

CULTURE-BASED EDUCATION

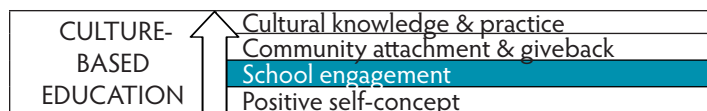
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Hawaiian Cultural Influences in Education (HCIE): School Engagement among Hawaiian Students

By Brennan Takayama and Brandon Ledward

The HCIE study examines the relationship between Hawaiian culture-based educational (CBE) strategies and student outcomes. As part of the study, we asked 600 middle and high school teachers to share their educational strategies with us. We also surveyed students of the same teachers to obtain a better sense of their educational experiences. These data help us understand the range of teaching and learning practices being used across Hawai'i schools.

Preliminary analyses reveal that students whose teachers use greater amounts of culture-based educational approaches are more likely to report higher rates of cultural knowledge and practice, community attachment and giveback, school engagement, and positive self-concept. This report looks specifically at levels of *school engagement* among participating students.



WHY DOES SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT MATTER?

Among students, high levels of school engagement are often associated with increased academic achievement and greater rates of persistence toward graduation. Researchers often measure school engagement with three concepts in mind: students' emotional engagement, including feelings about teachers, other students and school in general; their behavioral engagement, which can be inferred through positive conduct and adherence to rules; and cognitive engagement as evidenced by students' investment or willingness to exert effort in learning.¹

HOW DOES CULTURE-BASED EDUCATION FIT IN?

Hawaiian culture-based education grounds teaching and learning in culturally relevant content, contexts, and assessments, which draw heavily upon 'ohana (family), kaiāulu (community), and 'ōlelo (Hawaiian language). To better understand the ways in which culture-based educational strategies may influence school engagement, respondents are classified into two groups: students who have at least one teacher who uses the highest levels of culture-based education (High CBE Teachers) and students who do not have any teachers that use high or even moderate levels of culture-based education (Low CBE Teachers).²

WHAT ARE THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY?

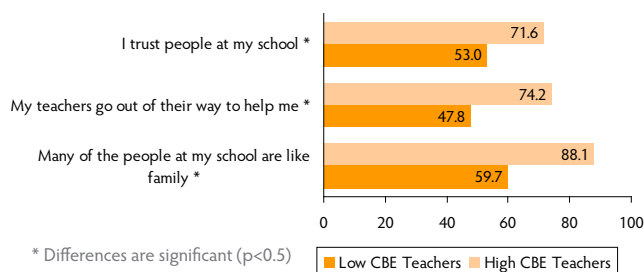
Across the three areas of school engagement typically examined by researchers, we see that the greatest impact of culture-based educational approaches is on students' emotional and cognitive engagement. Within these categories, meaningful differences emerge when students report on opportunities for applied learning and the formation of quality relationships with school staff. Students of High CBE Teachers tend to score higher in these areas where 'ohana, community giveback, and project-/place-based learning are more likely to be emphasized.

EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

When asked about grades and whether or not they like school, there are no significant differences in responses between students in the study. However, when asked what school they would attend if given a choice, 71.0 percent of students of High CBE Teachers selected their "current school" compared to 54.3 percent of students of Low CBE Teachers. A similar trend exists for educational aspirations, where 87.9 percent of students of High CBE Teachers expect to graduate from college compared to 73.5 percent of students of Low CBE Teachers.

Students exposed to High CBE Teachers are also more likely to form quality relationships with teachers and staff. For instance, 88.1 percent of students of High CBE Teachers believe many people at school are like family compared to 59.7 percent of students of Low CBE Teachers. A similar trend is evident when students are asked if they trust people at their school and whether they feel their teachers go out of their way to help them.

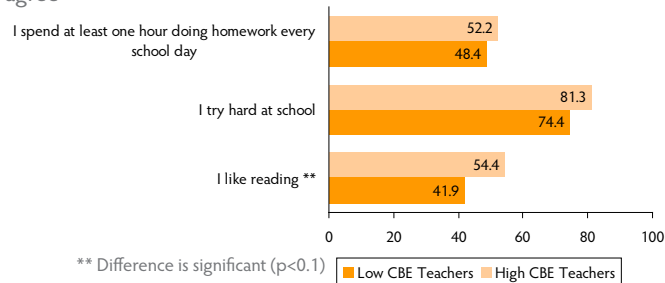
Figure 1: Emotional engagement and attitudes toward school relationships, percent of Hawaiian students who agree



BEHAVIORAL ENGAGEMENT

Indicators of behavioral engagement suggest a slight edge toward students of High CBE Teachers, but the differences are not statistically significant. Responses for the item, “I like reading,” approach statistical significance ($p < 0.1$) where 54.4 percent of students of High CBE Teachers agree with the statement compared to 41.9 percent of students of Low CBE Teachers. Overall, the two groups are virtually identical.

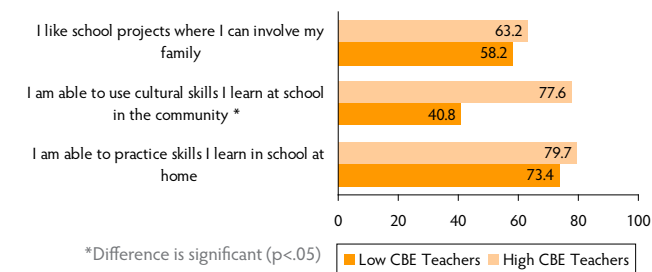
Figure 2: Behavioral engagement, percent of Hawaiian students who agree



COGNITIVE ENGAGEMENT

Research suggests that teachers who create opportunities for applied learning among their students increase the odds that information will be retained. In addition to school, students can apply their learning at home and in their community. Although not statistically significant, slightly higher rates of students of High CBE Teachers report that they practice skills learned in school at home and share what they learn in school with their families. However, a significantly greater percentage of students of High CBE Teachers state they are able to use cultural skills learned at school in the community (i.e., oli and other cultural protocols).

Figure 3: Cognitive engagement and applied learning, percent of Hawaiian students who agree



SUMMARY AND LIMITATIONS

Educators and researchers agree that increasing school engagement will likely lead to positive educational outcomes for students. When examining behavioral engagement alone, results show that students exposed to High CBE Teachers are not very different from those exposed only to Low CBE Teachers. However, important differences do exist between these groups concerning emotional and cognitive engagement. In particular,

quality relationships with staff and opportunities for applied learning are two major areas where students of High CBE Teachers report significantly greater levels of engagement. At the same time, differences such as these may be due to school size or other factors moderating the influence of CBE use. These limitations will be addressed in future analyses.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE STUDY

Hawaiian Cultural Influences in Education (HCIE) is a joint research project of Kamehameha Schools, the Hawai‘i Department of Education (HiDOE), and Nā Lei Na‘auao, an alliance of Hawaiian-focused public charter schools. The goal is to improve student outcomes by sharing best practices of culturally relevant education.

The study also seeks to recognize and measure student outcomes beyond grades or standardized tests. To determine the impact of CBE approaches on student development, a uniquely interlocking set of surveys was developed for school administrators, teachers, students, and parents.

HCIE data include responses from teachers, students, and parents in 62 schools across Hawai‘i. Participants represent five islands (Hawai‘i, O‘ahu, Kaua‘i, Maui, and Moloka‘i), including conventional public schools, charter schools, and Kamehameha Schools.

For more HCIE information visit www.ksbe.edu/spi/projects

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Endnotes

1 See Fredricks, J.A., Blumenfeld, P.C., & Paris, A.H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(1), 59-109.

2 For this report, the sample of ~3,000 students is limited to Native Hawaiian participants in public school settings (conventional public schools, kula kaiapuni, and charter schools) in grades 7–10 in school year 2005–2006 who are matched with at least one participating teacher.



KAMEHAMEHA SCHOOLS